

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a white lab coat, is looking through a microscope. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A large red circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Chest Heart & Stroke' in white, handwritten-style font.

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

RESEARCH AND IMPACT STRATEGY 2018 – 2023

Plain English version

NI Chest Heart & Stroke
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RESEARCH AND IMPACT STRATEGY

2018 – 2023

This is a “plain English” version of our strategy.

A strategy is a plan that outlines the activities we will do to reach our goals, and how we will make sure that what we do is working.

Our Research & Impact Strategy is our plan outlining what type of research we will fund, how much we will spend on this research, and how we will measure whether anyone benefitted from the services we provided them (“impact”).

This strategy is for the years 2018-2023.

Who are we and what do we do?

Chest Heart & Stroke NI is a local health charity, working in Northern Ireland.

- We provide care services for people who live with chest, heart, and stroke illnesses.
- We provide rehab and support to people recovering from these illnesses.
- We also support their families and carers.
- We persuade government to make decisions that will improve policy and services for chest, heart, and stroke.
- We fund researchers to study chest heart and stroke illnesses so that we can understand them better, and improve treatment and care. We have been funding research for over 50 years.

Find out more about what we do: <https://nichs.org.uk/how-we-can-support-you/>

We have been doing this work since 1946. You can find out more about our history on our website: <https://nichs.org.uk/about-us/history-of-nichs/>

Why do we have a Research & Impact Strategy?

Most of the work we do, including the Scientific Research Grant, is paid for with money that the public has donated to us. So, we work very hard to make sure that we spend this money well.

Research

We want to make sure that only the best research gets a grant. This strategy helps us decide what type of research to fund.

Once a year, researchers from Northern Ireland can apply for money to study chest heart and stroke illnesses. This is our “Scientific Research Grant”.

We only give a grant to research that is likely to help local people living with chest, heart, and stroke conditions. This means we fund research that is trying to develop new ways of detecting or treating these illnesses, or research that helps us better understand them.

We only give a grant to local research. This means we fund researchers who live and work here, usually in one of our universities.

Impact

We want to make sure that the services we provide actually benefit the people who use them. We call this “impact”. This strategy outlines how we will measure this.

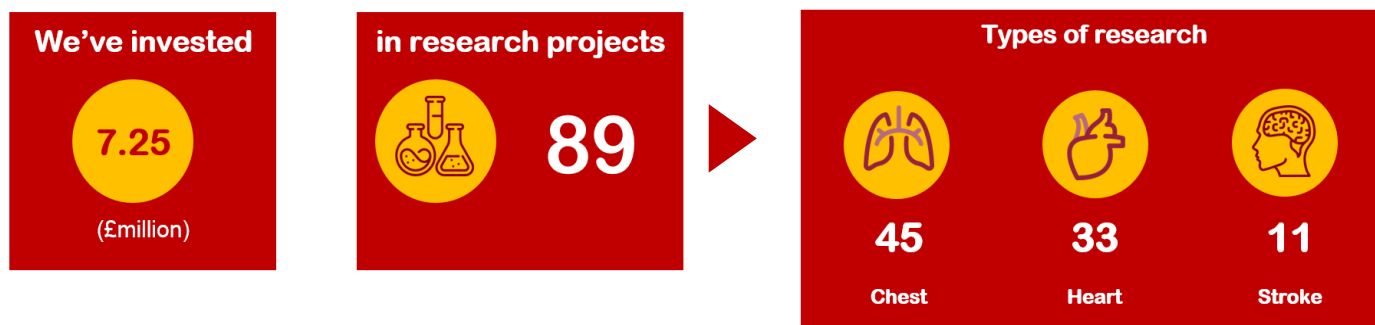
We measure how effective our services are using a method called Outcome Based Accountability (OBA). When we use OBA to measure our services, we ask three questions: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

You can find out more about OBA at: <https://bit.ly/2VOD5xw>

Why we think research is important.

For more than 50 years, we have funded research. Since 1994, we have invested more than £7 million pounds into local research. In total, we have invested money into 89 research projects. 15 of these are ongoing.

Since 1994...



This research has increased what we know about chest, heart, and stroke illnesses. It has improved how we detect and prevent these illnesses. It has improved how we treat and care for people with these conditions. The research we have funded has resulted in new services, changes in law, changes in treatment, and has helped thousands of people living with these conditions.

How do we know this? We carried out a review of the research we funded during the year 2006-2011. We gave over £2 million to researchers carrying out 33 projects. The review showed that this research had a number of benefits.

We are a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC for short) and we follow their “code of practice” (rules). The AMRC award us with a “quality mark” to show that we produce high quality research.

The research we funded...

...added to what science knows about chest, heart, and stroke illnesses.

- 73 research papers in scientific journals were published
- The findings were shared at 70 research conferences
- The research was mentioned in nearly a 1000 research papers written by other researchers

...helped researchers get more money for more research, and led to bigger research studies. It has also helped build up their experience and created research jobs.

Because of our research grants...

- three students were able to get PhDs, six students got hands-on research experience, and 19 university research jobs were created.
- researchers were in a better position to get bigger pots of money. In total, they received tens of millions of pounds to carry out bigger research studies, involving more people.

...was put into practice in the real world

We only fund research that will be of benefit to people across Northern Ireland. For example, because of our grants, we have been able to develop

- programmes in schools aimed at improving health and fitness;
- a self-management programme for people recovering from stroke; and
- make improvements in the training for health workers who support people with stroke

...helped improve services and the guidelines they used

- Our research created a test to check how severe a person's asthma is. This test is now used in severe asthma centres across the UK.
- Our asthma research has also been used to improve rules and guidance on how people with asthma should be treated. This includes the guidance in policies such as "Respiratory Frameworks", "NICE standards (2013)" as well as international asthma guidelines.

So, we believe that good quality research is worth investing in. It improves services and helps thousands of people and their loved ones, and this helps us get closer to our “vision” of Northern Ireland free of chest, heart, and stroke illnesses.

Over the next five years, we will invest at least £2 million pounds in high quality research in our local universities and hospitals. We will work hard to build partnerships with researchers and the organisations they work for. We will focus on research that has the most benefit for people across Northern Ireland.

What is “governance and accountability”?

This refers to how we police and manage what we do, and who is ultimately responsible (“accountable”) for this. NICHS has a group of people in formal roles that takes overall responsibility for its work. This group is called the “Governance Board”. The Chief Executive is in charge of what we do day to day, and reports to the Governance Board.

Research Governance and Accountability

The Governance Board is overall accountable for our research activities. They do this through the Chief Executive who is in charge of what the charity does day to day. The Director of Public Health manages the Research Department, and reports to the Chief Executive. The Research and Impact Manager carries out the work, and reports to the Director of Public Health.

Making decisions about which research to fund.

Once a year, we take applications for a grant from researchers. To make sure that the research is of high quality, and of benefit to local people, we have a Committee who assess the applications we receive. This committee is called the “Scientific Research Grants Committee” (SRC for short).

The SRC is made up of thirteen people. Two are members of the public – we call these “lay reps” – and the rest are expert researchers who work in universities and hospitals across the UK.

As part of the process of deciding which are best, we send applications to expert researchers outside Northern Ireland. These experts carry out research in the same area as the application. They carry out a “peer review” to check the quality of the research in the application. This information is sent back to the SRC.

The peer reviewers and the SRC score each application on four criteria:

- **Scientific quality.** How well designed is the research? Is it high quality?
- **Value for money.** Is it worth NICHS spending money on the project? Do the researchers explain how they will use the grant to complete the research?;
- **Impact for people in Northern Ireland.** What benefits will there be for people with chest, heart, and stroke conditions, or for their carers and families?; and
- **Impact for NICHS.** If we fund it, does it help us achieve our goals?

The Chief Executive and senior management also provide the SRC with their views on each application, but they don't have a say in the final decisions.

The SRC then recommends to the Governance Board which research projects they should fund. The Governance Board has the final say, and can ignore the SRC recommendations, but must give a strong reason why.

Our Research Priorities for 2018 – 2023

This strategy builds on the success of the last strategy. It also sets out our new priorities for over the next five years. These priorities are part of our overall Strategic Plan for 2018-2023.

The overall purpose of our research is 'to increase knowledge and identify better ways to prevent, treat and care for people affected by chest, heart and stroke conditions'.

Over the next five years, this strategy will focus our efforts on the following five strategic priorities

The peer reviewers and the SRC score each application on four criteria:

- **Knowledge.** To fund high-quality local research that will deliver real benefits.
- **Applying Learning.** To use what we learn from research to improve policy and services.
- **Collaboration.** Look at ways we can work with others to provide the greatest benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.
- **Communication.** Tell people about our research and the difference it makes.
- **Impact.** Be sure any research we fund and any services we provide do what they set out to and make a difference for the people who use them.

We will give priority to research that aims to deliver potential benefits to people more quickly.

This diagram outlines “Research and Impact Strategic Framework for 2018 -2023”. It shows the five strategic priorities, our vision and our mission, that make up our new research strategy.



Budget

We want to invest at least £2 million pounds into high-quality local research over the next five years. We will use our research work to help raise more money for more research. We will measure impact of our work so that we are accountable to the people who donate to us.

How we will roll out this strategy

1. We will set up a workshop to identify research priorities, gaps in our strategy, and help us focus our research work
2. We will advertise and fund high quality local research
3. We will make sure that every researcher who receives money from us sticks to the research grant guidelines
4. We will monitor all the work of every researcher who receives a grant from us to make sure they are delivering high quality work.
5. After five years, we will carry out a review of the research strategy and the work we have done. This is called an Impact Evaluation Assessment
6. We will communicate research progress and research findings in a number of different ways, including social media and our website.

How do we know we've been successful?

We will use the following "Measures of Success":

- The number of new policies and services that our research has informed.
- The number of new research partnerships we have developed.
- Increased awareness of our research.
- We will have shown that our service have the impact we intended. (We will have met our targets as set out by the performance measures in our impact framework).
- We will have carried out the five year Impact Evaluation Assessment.
- We will continue to have the AMRC quality mark.

Fidelma Carter, Public Health Director | Dr Frances Campbell, Research and Impact Manager

11th June 2018

NICHS Research and Impact Strategy 2018-2023

Theme	Priorities	Actions
1. Knowledge	To fund high-quality local research that will deliver real benefits.	1.1 To fund high-quality local research that fits with NICHS' overall strategic plan.
		1.2 To focus on research which aims to deliver potential benefits to people more quickly.
2 Applying Learning	To use what we learn from research to improve policy and services.	2.1 To use what we learn from research to (a) make sure NICHS services are based on best practice evidence. (b) to inform our policy and campaigning work.
		2.2 To explore different ways of communicating with the people who use and shape our services – to help us decide what our priorities should be.
3 Collaboration	Look at ways we can work with others to provide the greatest benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.	3.1 To explore ways of funding research with other funders, and maximise the overall impact of the research.
		3.2 To use the research we fund to generate more income.
4 Communication	Tell people about our research and the difference it makes.	4.2 To use different platforms to share and publicise
		4.3 To produce user-friendly communications – and use our lay reps as much as possible when producing materials.
5 Impact	Be sure any research we fund and any services we provide make a difference for the people who use them.	5.3 To measure the impact of NICHS research programme. To carry out an external evaluation of the progress we have made developing our Impact Framework
		5.4 To carry out an independent evaluation of our services to make sure that they are based on evidence of impact.